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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1057
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 1802
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY 0975
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY 7967
RUEHUM/AMEMBASSY ULAANBAATAR PRIORITY 0388
RHMFISS/COMUSKOREA SEOUL KOR PRIORITY
RUACAAA/COMUSKOREA INTEL SEOUL KOR PRIORITY
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RHMFISS/COMUSJAPAN YOKOTA AB JA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 002072

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/15/2026
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHSA](#) [PBTS](#) [KS](#) [JA](#)
SUBJECT: TOKYO REMAINS CALM OVER TOKDO/TAKESHIMA

REF: SEOUL 1246

Classified By: Ambassador J. Thomas Schieffer. Reason: 1.4 (b)(d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: At midnight on April 14, MOFA Northeast Asia Division Director Ito invited Political Officer to the Foreign Ministry to explain why Japan had notified the South Korean government that it intended to send a Maritime Safety Agency vessel to map the seabed in the area surrounding the disputed Takeshima/Tokdo islands. Ito explained that Japan needed to conduct the research in order to prepare a proposal for a June meeting of the Subcommittee on Undersea Feature Names (SCUFN). Japan has not informed the ROK of its reason because it is part of Japan's strategy to counter a naming proposal the South Koreans plan to put forth at that June meeting, Ito explained, adding that Seoul has already conducted mapping of the area and is ready to propose names for the topographical features it has found. Japan doesn't want the ROK naming conventions to go unchallenged. Despite a strong response from Seoul, Japan intends to proceed with the mapping expedition as planned, Ito insisted. As instructed on Saturday April 15, Embassy relayed Washington's concern about the heightened tensions to the Foreign Ministry. On the afternoon of April 17, Ito's deputy, Kosei Murota, informed Embassy Tokyo that the situation was "calm," with no further inflammatory statements or provocative occurring on either side. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Informed April 14 the Republic of Korea had officially protested the seabed survey being conducted by the Japanese Maritime Safety Agency, Political Officer called on MOFA Northeast Asia Division Director Ito to receive the Japanese government's explanation of events. Ito spread out maps that indicated a large "gray area" between the Japanese claimed EEZ and the ROK claimed EEZ, with the Takeshima/Tokdo islands falling inside that disputed zone. Ito said the current row was touched off when the Japanese government notified the ROK under the SOLAS (Safety of Lives At Sea) international convention that it intends to conduct scientific research within that disputed area sometime between April 14 and June 30. Ito acknowledged that the South Korean government had issued a very strong protest stating that Japan's plan an "arbitrary distortion of international law," that Japan should "immediately withdraw its illegal plan," that "responsibility would be totally born by the Japanese side," and that South Korea "will take every necessary measure to deter Japan's provocative action."

¶3. (C) Ito explained that a Maritime Safety Agency vessel would explore the area for the purpose of mapping the seabed, acknowledging that it was the first time Japan has conducted

such a survey in 30 years. Asked why they had chosen this particular time, Ito explained that Japan needed to conduct the research in order to prepare a proposal for a June meeting of the Subcommittee on Undersea Feature Names (SCUFN). The Japanese government has not informed the ROK government of its reason because it is part of Japan's strategy to counter a naming proposal the ROK plans to put forth at that June meeting. Seoul has already conducted mapping of the area and is now ready to propose names for the topographical features it has found, Ito claimed. Japan doesn't want the ROK naming conventions to go unchallenged. Despite the ROK's strong response, Japan intends to proceed with the mapping expedition as planned, Ito insisted. Ito's deputy, Kosei Murota, later confided that some government officials were quite upset at the disrespectful way the ROK government had referred to Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe by describing the explanation he had made at his Friday press conference as "worth no thinking."

¶4. (C) Poloff subsequently contacted Deputy Murota on Saturday, April 15 to relay Washington's concern over heightened tensions and to urge restraint on both sides. Murota promised to convey the message to his superiors.

¶5. (C) When Poloff contacted Murota on the afternoon of April 17 for an update, Murota described the situation as calm, stating there had been no inflammatory statements or provocative actions on either side.
SCHIEFFER